AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (previously presented): A method for managing multiple requests of span and ring protections in a telecommunications network with a four-fibers ring topology protected by a traffic protection mechanism in which signals arranged as frames of bytes are transmitted and in which the transmitted frames comprise a first pair of bytes for indicating the request of ring protection of at least one type, wherein the method further comprises the step of providing at least one additional pair of bytes in the transmitted frames, the at least one additional pair of bytes being used for indicating the requests of span protections of at least two different types for at least two different spans at the same time of the request of ring protection.

Claims 2-3 (cancelled).

4. (previously presented): The method according to claim 1, wherein said telecommunications network is a transoceanic optical network.

Claims 5-7 (cancelled).

8. (previously presented): The method according to claim 1, wherein the network includes at least one path protected by the traffic protection mechanism, the method comprising the additional steps of processing the first pair of bytes and the at least one additional pair of bytes and evaluating whether the at least one path can be protected taking into account the processed bytes.

Claims 9-12 (cancelled).

13. (previously presented): A network element for a telecommunications network with a four-fibres ring topology protected by a traffic protection mechanism, wherein signals arranged as frames travel through said network, the network element comprising means for receiving signal frames, the signal frames including a first pair of bytes for indicating a request of ring protection of at least one type and including at least one additional pair of bytes for indicating requests of span protections of at least two different types for at least two different spans at the same time of the request of ring protection.

14. (currently amended): A computer program product comprising computer program code ~~adapted to perform~~for performing all steps of the method according to claims 1, 4, or 8 when said program is run on a computer.

15. (currently amended): A computer readable medium having a program recorded thereon, said computer readable medium comprising computer program code ~~adapted to perform~~ for performing all steps of the method according to claims 1, 4, or 8 when said program is run on a computer.

16. (previously presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein said at least one additional pair of bytes are not yet reserved for other purposes.